U.S. COAST GUARD

Homeland Security

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GOOD LEADERSHIP AND TIMELY OERS

We recently conducted an assessment of the Officer Evaluation System (OES). This review analyzed 51,000 officer evaluations generated from the current OER's inception in 1998 through calendar year 2004. One area of concern continues to be the timeliness of OER submissions.

An analysis of the timeliness of 2004 OER submissions revealed disturbing results with only 45 percent of all OERs arriving at CGPC within the prescribed 45 days after the end of a reporting period. This poor average represents a continued downward trend since the last comprehensive OES review in 2001 - a trend that must be reversed.

Recent feedback from the field suggests that increased operational tempo and unit mission requirements may, in part, be responsible for the poor submission timeliness of OERs. I recognize the impact of increased mission requirements on our people, but it is not an acceptable excuse. Timely and accurate performance feedback is a core leadership responsibility that must remain a priority. Unit commanders must be cognizant of the effects that late OERs have on officer trust in the system, assignment decisions, promotions, and career development. Late OERs sometimes translate to poor quality OERs. In addition, submission delays seriously impact the time available for conducting a quality review and making necessary corrections before a validated OER can be placed in an officer's record. It is imperative that officer records are accurate and complete prior to promotion boards, advanced education panels, command screening and the assignment season. Finally, good leaders employ the practice of timely performance feedback. I recognize that feedback can and should take many forms other than through the OER. However, Reported-on Officers should not be surprised with the content of their OER. Late OER submissions systematically eliminate the important practice of end-of-period counseling. This denies the affected officers the opportunity at the start of the next reporting period to improve performance, thus increasing dissatisfaction, distrust, and frustration with the OER process. Rating chain officials are strongly encouraged to provide Reported-On Officers with performance feedback on completed OERs prior to the submission of the evaluations to the OER Administrators.

I firmly believe that in order for the OES to remain healthy and viable in the future, unit commanders must reemphasize timeliness and good leadership practices. I urge all unit commanders to examine their internal OER processes and to improve their OER submission timeliness if indicated. Commands are strongly encouraged to establish tracking systems that provide visibility on the status of OER submittals at all levels of the Chain of Command. This should serve to create self-correcting behavior to improve this critical part of our OES. This is both an active duty and Reserve officer issue.

Regards,

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